

Government Council takes up National Recovery Plan for the field of science and research

On Friday 4 September, the regular session of the Government Research, Development and Innovation Council (the Council) took place at Straka Academy. The main topics of the meeting were the Czech Innovation Strategy 2019–2030, research development and innovation support under the economic strategy (National Recovery Plan) and the Draft RDI Budget for 2021–2023. The prime minister also announced the intention to bestow the Council Chairman's Award upon Václav Cílek. The selection of a candidate for the Česká hlava National Award was suspended in connection with the necessity of providing for a remote voting mechanism.

To start off, the Council members received information from the meeting of the coordinators of the Czech Innovation Strategy 2019–2030, which had immediately preceded the Council session.

"The individual projects and initiatives from the Innovation Strategy 2030 action plan are being successfully implemented, despite the COVID crisis. The pandemic situation has even accelerated certain activities. This concerns for example support for innovation and start-ups in order to develop resilience or digitisation projects," said Deputy Industry and Trade Minister Silvan Jirotková on the results of the coordinator meeting. Successful implementation of the Innovation Strategy is also evidenced by the Czech Republic's recent move into the 25 world innovation leaders in the Global Innovation Index. The Czech Republic ranked 24th out of 131 countries of the world.



PM Babiš attends the 359th session; the press conference after the meeting. Photo: Office of the Government

The Council followed this up by discussing the **first points of the forthcoming National Recovery Plan for the Field of Research, Development and Innovation**. In connection with this, the Council will set up two working groups who will work on proposals for interventions in the field of industrial applied research and development in the field of health, comprising health care, biomedicine and public health, including the impact of the pandemic on society. This item of the talks was suspended until the following Council session on 25 September of this year.

After talks with the Minister of Finance and Deputy PM Havlíček, and following interministerial comments proceedings, under the next item the Council approved the **Draft Expenditures for Research, Development and Innovation with an Outlook to 2023** for discussion by the government with the following numbers:

for **2021** a total of **CZK 37.5 billion**

for **2022** a total of **CZK 38 billion**

for **2023** a total of **CZK 38.6 billion**

PM Andrej Babiš, who chairs the Council, reaffirmed at the meeting the government's interest in preserving the planned financial support for science and research despite the situation of the state budget deficit as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the draft budget, the Council members also took into account the finances that should enter the budget from the National Recovery Fund. These are **funds from European funds of up to 5 billion** that should be markedly transformational in nature.

The Council also discussed an **amendment to Act 130/2002 Coll.**, on support for research, experimental development and innovation from public sources. Following difficult negotiations, a consensus was arrived at and the material was approved and will be passed along to the government and subsequently put into the legislative process.

Under the regular item on **Implementation of the 2017+ Methodology**, the Council members took into account, among other things, the possible impact of the exceptional situation associated with COVID-19 on the course of evaluation of research organisations in the university sector. The on-site visits that were to take place during the autumn can be held as videoconferences, which in many cases will mean more thorough and demanding discussions. *"A difficult discussion also took place on the possibility of publishing examples of good practice in the evaluation of Module 1, i.e. in assessment of selected research results by experts. It was evident that the understanding of the term societal relevance differs not only among expert evaluators, but also among members of the Council,"* said First Council Vice-Chair Petr Dvořák.

Council members approved the text of a call for submission of candidate nominations for members of the Czech Science Foundation's Scientific Advisory Board. Talks on the point Proposal for awarding the Česká hlava National Government Award for 2020 were interrupted – the reason for this was the need to work out a mechanism for remote voting, which is not currently formally possible and which will be highly useful in light of the pandemic situation.

PM Andrej Babiš decided on once again awarding the **Research, Development and Innovation Council Chairman's Award for Presentation and Popularisation of Research**. This year the prestigious award will go to well known geologist, climatologist and writer Václav Cílek.

Václav Cílek deals in his work primarily with popular science, changes in climate and environment (through various aspects of environmental geology), the development of the Czech landscape and interactions between nature and civilisation. He has to his name around 400 essays, over a hundred film documentaries, and has contributed to around fifty book titles. He has participated in a number of popular science series on Czech Television, and among other things is a regular commentator on the Czech Radio Two show *Jak to vidí... [As seen by...]*. Up until 2012, Václav Cílek was the director of the

Institute of Geology of the Czech Academic of Sciences, where he continues to work as a leading research employee.

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